



Dr. Burns' Three-Column Technique for Untwisting Our Thinking

*Review the three examples provided, then start tackling some of your own limiting beliefs (see page 3 for a list of common cognitive distortions) ...

Limiting Belief	Distortion	Rational Thought
I don't have time to write in a journal even though I would really like to.	Magnification (blowing things out of proportion).	I AM very busy right now with work, kid stuff, and looking after the house, but maybe I could set aside 15 minutes a day for me each night before I go to bed to write in my journal.
My family needs me; I don't have time to exercise.	All or nothing (black or white thinking) – I'm focused on my family OR I'm focused on myself. I can't be focused on both.	My children DO take up a lot of my time and attention, but perhaps when they are watching a show in the evening, I could exercise for 15 minutes.
If I focus on me, I'm being selfish.	Labelling - "I'm so selfish."	While focusing on me could be perceived as being selfish, I have clear reasons why this is important. I am ALLOWED to focus on myself each day.

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CHECKLIST OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

1.	All or nothing thinking: You look at things in absolute, black and white categories.
2.	Overgeneralization: You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
3.	Mental Filter: You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.
4.	Discounting the positives: You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities "don't count."
5.	Jumping to conclusions: (A) Mind reading - you assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there's no definite evidence for this; (B) Fortune Telling - you arbitrarily predict things will turn out badly.
6.	Magnification or Minimization: You blow things way out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately.
7.	Emotional Reasoning: You reason from how you feel: "I feel like an idiot, so I really must be one." Or "I don't feel like doing this, so I'll put it off."
8.	"Should Statements": You criticize yourself or other people with "Shoulds" or "Shouldn'ts." "Musts," "Oughts," "Have tos" are similar offenders.
9.	Labeling: You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying, "I made a mistake," you tell yourself, "I'm a jerk," or "a fool," or "a loser."
10.	Personalization and Blame: You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that your own attitudes and behavior might contribute to a problem.

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